Mitchell brothers earn MMRs 311 & 312

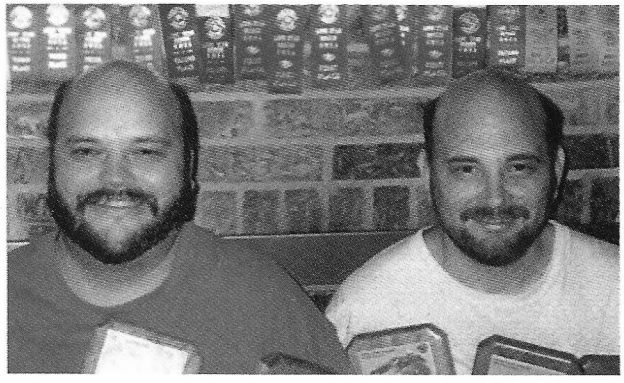
Tracy and Terry Mitchell recently became the two newest Master Model Railroaders. They are Master Model Railroader number 311 and number 312 respectively. Terry and Tracy, known collectively as "TNT" in the Lone Star Region, are noted for their "Dynamite" modeling. They have won numerous NMRA contest awards on the local, Regional, and National level, as well as at the National Narrow Gauge Convention. Even though they look similar there are two years difference in their ages. Tracy is the oldest.

They started out in modeling like most kids do, by getting a Lionel train for Christmas. But this time it was no ordinary three-rail Lionel, but HO scale. This lasted all of two years. Then it was up to the folks' attic for storage. The brothers were into the usual stuff; cars, girls, and music. Along the way they got into plastic model kits, mostly cars. Next came military models. This is where the brothers started honing their modeling skills.

In 1982 a chance visit to a local craft store found them down the railroad aisle to kill time while the rest of the family shopped. This started them thinking of what happened to the Lionel they had as kids. At home they went up into the attic. After looking at the set that night their plan was laid out. The next morning they went back and bought another train set as well as some Athearn cars and an Athearn F7.

That week they went to every hobby store in town looking at and buying train supplies. Several magazines were purchased as well. The next progression was railfanning and layout building. The brothers were hooked.

They entered their first model contest in 1985. In 1986 and 1987, Terry won best in show at the local San Jac Jamboree. For the next few years they both were taking first place awards in several categories.



When the brothers found out the national convention was going to be in Houston in 1989, they decided to join the NMRA and LSR. In 1988 they became members, and went to their first LSR convention. When they came back from there with numerous first place awards, they started on the path of more contests, and contest quality model building. They tore down their old layout and started concentrating on model building only. At that time, they were not only placing in the contests, but sweeping a category as well. This got them the nickname of TNT.

One year Gil Freitag, the LSR contest chairman at that time, grew tired of the paperwork from the 20-plus models that TNT were entering at each contest, so he asked them "If you enter that many models you could at least come in and help make ribbons for them?" This opened a whole new door into judging. They have been judging and running contests ever since.

When the national was going to Denver in 1991, they looked into narrow gauge. What they found in researching the Colorado Rockies was a true love. They then switched to HOn3. But Terry wanted to build a model for the National in Denver that people could see, so he moved up to On3 and built "The Stockcar," accurate in almost every detail. Many of you have seen this car. It was the one where Terry used parakeet droppings to model cow manure.

This new love of the narrow gauge kept them busy building even more quality models. They received their first two achievement certificates during this time—Cars and Motive Power.

In 1998, a new club was formed from narrow gaugers living in the Houston area. The new group, "The Narrow Gauge Cartel," along with other MMRs from the region encouraged the brothers to finish the models and paperwork needed for their MMR. They completed the rest of the certificates during the next four years. They are true "rubber" gaugers having modeled in N, HO, HOn30, HOn3, Sn3, On30, On3, G, 1:20.3 scale, and are starting to explore large-scale live steam.

In 2001, Terry got married and moved from Houston to Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. Terry is now

known as TNT Northern Division, and Tracy is TNT Southern Division. The brothers might be separated by 2,500 miles but not in spirit. They still bounce modeling ideas off of each other having finished the last two certificates after Terry moved away.

The certificates that both hold are Cars, Motive Power, Structures, Prototype Modeler, Chief Dispatcher, Volunteer, and Author. They are members of the LSR, Texas Gulf Division, San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, Houston Narrow Gauge Cartel, and the Southern Forest Heritage Museum, a sawmill and logging museum located in Louisiana that is dear to their hearts.

As far as they know they are the only brother combination to achieve MMR. The two brother's give back to the modeling community, having written many articles and by giving clinics on the local and regional scene. If you see the two of them at a convention they are usually found in the contest room. They both enjoy giving advice to help novice modeler's become better modelers. They enjoy this as much as building the models. The contest room is also a great place for learning new things for themselves. They are constantly trying out new techniques to improve their modeling ability.

What did they get from the NMRA and the Achievement program? Life-long friendships with fellow modelers from around the country. And a hobby that not only is art, but is also dedicated to preserving history.